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Career Opportunities for Home Economics Professionals

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Career Opportunities for Home Economics Professionals

By K. J. Coulter and M. Stanton

"If the United States is to continue as the lead Nation in confronting problems associated with increasing global population and decreasing agricultural and natural resources, it must possess the requisite human capital—individuals with higher education in the food and agricultural sciences."[1]

The above statement represents the basic purpose of a continuing national assessment, by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), of the relationships between the supply of and demand for college graduates in the food and agricultural sciences. This report summarizes a USDA publication on the results of such an analysis for home economists.[2]

Home economists are an essential component of necessary human capital if the United States is to maintain economic growth, conserve natural resources, and maintain the health and well-being of U.S. families and individuals. Professionals in the broad range of disciplines comprising home economics assist U.S. families and family members with problems arising from such stressors as economic uncertainty and inflation, energy and natural resource depletion, urbanization and inadequate housing, changing marital patterns, marital conflicts, and evolving roles of family members. They are concerned with food adequacy, safety and quality; human diet and nutrition; consumer safety and welfare; parenting and child care; family economic stability; clothing and shelter; and other issues important to family and individual well-being.

This study was based, mainly, on data originally gathered by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor. A panel of home economics consultants identified the data deemed most appropriate for purposes of this study. The most significant results of the study are as follows:

- Through 1990 the average annual supply of U.S. college graduates is expected to be 7,035 individuals short of meeting the demand for professionals trained in home economics and related fields.
- The employment opportunities through 1990 for baccalaureate graduates in home economics are projected to be substantial. However, the greatest needs for additional graduates at this level are expected to be in business, family/consumer resource management, food service and institutional management, food science and human nutrition, human environment and shelter, and textiles and clothing.

[1]Coulter, K.J. and M. Stanton (ed.). *Graduates of Higher Education in the Food and Agricultural Sciences: An Analysis of Supply/Demand Relationships, Volume I—Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Veterinary Medicine.* USDA, Misc. Pub. No. 1385, July 1980.

[2]Coulter, K.J. and M. Stanton. *Graduates of Higher Education in the Food and Agricultural Sciences: An Analysis of Supply/Demand Relationships, Volume II—Home Economics.* USDA, Misc. Pub. No. 1407, February, 1981.

• The supply of individuals having advanced preparation—master's degrees and doctorates—is expected to be especially short through 1990. The degree specializations that appear to be in greatest demand at the master's level are the same as those at the baccalaureate level. Through 1990 the annual supply of doctoral graduates is estimated to be inadequate across the full spectrum of home economics specializations.

A continuing supply of home economics professionals is needed for the future growth of household-oriented business and industry, development of the full potential of individuals and families to improve the quality of their lives, and achievement of individual and family stability and security. In essence, home economics graduates have the technical expertise that is needed—throughout the Government, industry, and education—in work directed toward sustaining and enhancing the quality of life for families and individuals. In the highly industrialized society of the United States, this type of expertise is essential to help families and individuals effectively use the vast amounts of information being generated, select from a continually increasing number of choices, cope with a multitude of changes, and provide for the best possible quality of life. The projected shortages of higher education graduates with expertise in home economics could further restrict progress toward the national priorities and goals that are associated with improving the quality of life for individuals and families.

Total Average Annual Supply and Demand

All Occupational Clusters, 1977-90

Supply	***47,195***
Demand	***54,230***

The demand for college graduates in home economics in the United States is projected to average 54,230 annually through 1990. For this study, college graduates are defined as individuals having associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees in home economics and closely related fields.

The supply of college graduates in home economics is projected to average 47,195 annually through 1990. Of that total, 48 percent, or 22,655, are projected to be graduates of colleges of home economics. About 52 percent, or 24,540, are projected to have related degrees in such specializations as business management and administration, sociology, marketing, microbiology, journalism, and applied design. Based on the projections, the aggregate demand for college graduates in home economics and related fields through 1990 should exceed supply by 13 percent.

Supply and demand relationships are presented for

the following seven home economics occupational clusters:

- Administrators and managers
- Design, manufacturing, and processing specialists
- Marketing, merchandising, and sales personnel
- Media specialists
- Scientific and professional specialists
- Service specialists
- Educators

The following discussion focuses on the supply/demand relationships for college graduates within each occupational cluster. Examples of specific occupations included in each cluster are presented, along with an interpretation of the supply and demand data.

Administrators and Managers

Administrators and Managers, 1977-90

Supply	***4,046***
Demand	***7,115***

Included in this group are the occupations that require managerial and administrative competencies, as well as professional expertise in one of the disciplines comprising the broad field of home economics. All such occupations associated with Government and public administration, business, industry, and social service agencies are included. Only administrators and managers in education and in the Cooperative Extension Services are excluded; they are included in the occupational cluster "Educators."

Examples of positions in this cluster are—

- Financial consultant
- Administrative analyst
- Family service center director
- Group counseling program director
- Caterer
- Child welfare director
- Fashion director
- Marketing manager
- Production supervisor
- Cafeteria director
- Hotel catering manager
- Housing manager

Results of the investigation indicate that the demand for home economics administrators and managers will average 7,115 annually through 1990. In contrast, the annual supply for the same period is projected to average 4,046 annually, or 43 percent less than the annual demand.

Entry into administrative and managerial positions often requires a graduate education. Yet, master's and doctoral graduates are projected to be available to fill only 11 percent of the average annual demand. The supply of baccalaureate graduates available is projected to equal another 43 percent of the demand. Of the average annual supply of graduates, 30 percent are estimated to have degrees from colleges of home economics and 70 percent to have related degrees in such areas as business management and administration.

The demand for administrators and managers should increase through 1990. Throughout the decade, expansion of public housing and multifamily

dwellings, food-service and lodging industries, licensed child care, social services, residential institutions, and financial offices dealing with families and consumers should continue to influence the need for professionals with administrative management competencies and expertise in a home economics discipline.

Employment opportunities should be especially good for graduates in—

- Business home economics
- Family/consumer resource management
- Food science and institutional management
- Human environment and shelter
- Textiles and clothing

Design, Manufacturing, and Processing Specialists

Design, Manufacturing, and Processing Specialists, 1977-90

Supply	***5,794***
Demand	***7,444***

This occupational cluster includes the home economics related occupations encompassing the design, manufacture, processing, quality control, or regulation of food, clothing, and shelter and of related products such as toys, household equipment, and furnishings. Professionals in this area are concerned with developing and applying new technology and knowledge to enhance product reliability and performance, minimize production costs, and satisfy production regulations. Knowledge of the unique purchasing wants and needs of special segments of society, such as the disabled, elderly, ethnic groups, and single-parent families, is increasingly important for employment in these home economics related fields. Examples of positions in this cluster are—

- Meat specialist
- Fashion designer
- Commercial designer
- Health inspector
- Material analyst
- Display artist
- Fabric designer
- Furniture designer
- Service representative

Through 1990 the projected overall average annual supply of 5,794 specialists in design, manufacturing, and processing is 22 percent less than the projected demand for 7,444 professionals. Of the average annual supply, 25 percent are estimated to have degrees in home economics and 75 percent in related curricula such as applied design. By degree level, the average annual supply of doctoral graduates satisfies less than 1 percent of the average annual employment demand; master's, 15 percent; baccalaureate, 38 percent; and associate, 24 percent.

As manufacturing and processing industries strive to produce goods that will better meet consumer demand and welfare needs, home economists should play an increasingly important role in product design, development, testing, and regulation. Food scientists and technologists will be needed to

develop alternative foods, experiment with new food processing techniques, adapt ethnic foods, and improve or control commercial food processing. Clothing and textile specialists will be needed to enhance the design and production of fabrics, wearing apparel, draperies, carpeting, and upholstered furnishings. Human environment and shelter specialists will be needed to further improve household equipment and appliances, to develop innovative techniques for conserving energy, to design multipurpose furnishings, and to develop efficient spatial arrangements. In essence, technological advancements such as supersonic cleaning of clothes, microwave preparation of food, laser beam preservation of food, mechanical deboning of meat, and design and production of synthetic furnishings will require the expertise of home economists in product design, manufacturing, and processing.

The demand for qualified higher education graduates is projected to exceed supply through 1990. Graduates with the following degree specializations appear to be especially needed to better satisfy employment demand:

- Food science and human nutrition
- Human environment and shelter
- Textiles and clothing

Likewise, the growth of fast-food and convenience-food industries and of industries that manufacture clothing and home furnishings continues to provide excellent employment opportunities for students who have a 2-year associate degree leading to requisite specialized skills.

Marketing, Merchandising, and Sales Personnel

Marketing, Merchandising and Sales Personnel, 1977-90
Supply 12,581
Demand 17,069

Included in this cluster are retail/wholesale occupations concerned with the marketing, merchandising, and sale of food, clothing, shelter, household equipment, furnishings, and related products. Positions represented in this cluster are as diverse as the following:

- Window designer
- Account executive
- Demonstrator
- Buyer
- Economist
- Customer representative
- Manufacturer's representative
- Realtor
- Insurance salesperson

Of the seven occupational employment clusters identified, the projected annual demand is the largest for marketing, merchandising, and sales personnel. Through 1990 the projected average annual demand for college-educated personnel in this cluster is 17,069. An average annual supply of 12,581 graduates is expected, leaving an average annual deficit of 4,488 professionals—an unmet demand of 26 percent.

More than 50 percent of the overall average annual demand is for sales workers, sales managers, and department heads. The demand is also sizable for buyers, display coordinators, and customer-relations representatives.

Doctoral graduates should be available to fill less than 1 percent of the total demand for professionals in this occupational cluster; master's graduates, 10 percent; baccalaureate graduates, 58 percent; and associate graduates, 5 percent. Consequently, substantial employment opportunities are projected through 1990 for graduates in home economics and related fields who have expertise in marketing, merchandising, and sales. Doctoral graduates should find good opportunities for marketing positions. Master's and baccalaureate graduates will be needed primarily for marketing and merchandising positions. Associate graduates should find ready employment in a variety of sales positions.

Essentially all phases of food-, clothing-, and shelter-distribution systems require procurement of raw materials, marketing of consumer goods and services, and attention to consumer satisfaction. Therefore, many buyers, merchandisers, display specialists, demonstrators, marketing analysts, economists, and customer relations personnel are needed in the labor force. A sustained demand for marketing, merchandising, and sales personnel is anticipated because food, clothing, and shelter are necessary to meet the basic needs of individuals and families, and families today generally purchase such items instead of producing them.

Additionally, today's economic and social conditions require planning and preparing for possible monetary needs that exceed the financial resources of the average individual or family. A death, disability, or illness; loss of employment; or property damage or loss can cause unexpected, extreme financial hardship to a family. Protection against financial losses from such occurrences through various forms of insurance is increasingly important. Home economics graduates with expertise in family economics and consumer resource management are uniquely qualified to advise families in providing for future financial security. Annually through 1990, about 200 graduates in family economics and consumer resource management should find career opportunities as insurance agents, brokers, and underwriters.

Throughout this decade, home economics graduates with expertise in technical subject matter and in business/marketing should be in a strong position to compete for employment in this occupational cluster.

Graduates appear to be especially needed in—

- Business
- Family/consumer resource management
- Food service and institutional management
- Food science or human nutrition
- Textiles and clothing
- Home economics education, with specializations in marketing, merchandising, or consumer education.

Media Specialists

Media Specialists, 1977-90

Supply	***1,936***
Demand	***1,626***

This cluster consists of occupations that involve the transfer of home economics related information to the public through the various media. Hence, these occupations require proficiency in a home economics discipline, knowledge related to a field of media, an excellent command of language, ability to think clearly and logically, and skill in transmitting subject information to an audience. Professionals in these occupations generally are employed by publishing houses, newspapers, radio and television stations, libraries and museums, and advertising agencies. Additionally, Government and private businesses employ media specialists to translate and disseminate research findings and product information to the public. Editors and reporters; advertising agents and sales workers; and public relations specialists, writers, and publicity writers account for 72 percent of the projected annual demand. Projections indicate that 33 percent of the supply will consist of graduates in home economics; and the other 67 percent, of graduates in related programs such as communications and journalism.

Examples of positions in this cluster are—

- Director of public relations
- Advertising specialist
- Magazine writer
- Information specialist
- Archivist
- Commercial artist
- Technical editor
- Publicity director
- Health technical writer
- Director of public information

Through 1990 the U.S. demand for home economists as media specialists is projected to average 1,626 annually, compared with an expected average annual supply of 1,936.

The overall average annual supply of new graduates with home economics degrees who will be qualified for employment as media specialists meets 40 percent of the estimated total average annual demand of 1,626 professionals. When graduates with home economics related degrees are considered, the overall supply appears to exceed the overall demand.

By degree level, doctorates contribute 2 percent and master's degrees 27 percent toward meeting the overall average annual employment demand.

Baccalaureate and associate graduates appear to be available to meet the remaining employment demand.

Important occupational fields for home economics media specialists are editing, reporting, and writing. Government, private industry, and education employ personnel with expertise in these fields to report research findings for use by professionals and consumers. Business, professional, and service organizations and agencies employ them to edit and publish newsletters, magazines, and other publications for employees, members, and the general public. Additionally, such professionals are employed by firms that publish technical journals, books, and other materials for professional and public users. Position opportunities for home economics media specialists should also be available with advertising and sales agencies.

The demand for archivists, curators, and radio and television announcers, as well as for librarians, painters, sculptors, and photographers, appears to be limited.

The average annual number of graduates who complete a degree specialization in home economics communications is relatively low. Therefore, employment opportunities for these graduates should be numerous. However, other home economics graduates who would like a career in communications should expect significant competition from graduates in related fields who have similar qualifications.

Rapidly expanding knowledge and an accelerating demand for valid, adequate information relative to concerns that affect the quality of life for families and individuals contribute to a growing need for professional home economists who can prepare and disseminate desired information through the various media. Therefore, students who desire media careers should be encouraged to pursue degree programs that emphasize both communications skills and the following subject matter specializations:

- Food science or human nutrition
- Home economics communications
- Home economics education
- Human environment and shelter
- Textiles and clothing

Scientific and Professional Specialists

Scientific and Professional Specialists, 1977-90	
Supply	*4,578*
Demand	*4,819*

Included in this cluster are professional occupations that involve high levels of scientific and technical competency in home economics. The scientists and technical specialists employed in these occupations strive, through research and related endeavors, to develop and apply knowledge toward advancing the physical, biological, and social welfare of families and individuals.

Examples of positions in this cluster are—

- Consultant dietitian
- Research dietitian
- Therapeutic dietitian
- Lighting specialist
- Fiber analyst
- Laboratory supervisor
- Laboratory technician
- Nutritional chemist
- Food processing chemist
- Housing inspector
- Clinical biochemist
- Textile chemist
- Behavioral scientist
- Food scientist
- Nutrition director
- Homemaker rehabilitation specialist
- Biometrician

The study projects an average annual demand for 4,819 scientific and professional specialists through 1990. The supply of graduates qualified to assume positions as scientific and professional specialists is anticipated to average 4,578 annually. More than 60 percent of this projected demand is for dietitians.

The study indicates that, through 1990, the demand for specialists qualified in home economics and related scientific and professional fields will exceed the supply by 5 percent. Graduates with home economics degrees represent 55 percent of the overall average annual employment demand; and those with degrees in home economics related fields, 40 percent. By degree level, the average annual supply of doctoral graduates appears to meet 2 percent of employment demand; master's, 12 percent; and baccalaureate, 81 percent.

The public increasingly expresses concern for a nutritious and safe food supply at reasonable cost and for an improved quality of life through safe, functional, and cost-efficient housing, clothing, and furnishings. Further, attention to family pressures associated with such issues as urbanization, population growth, working wives and mothers, inflation, and changing lifestyles is increasing. Therefore, a sustained demand for scientific and professional home economists who can help resolve these problems is anticipated throughout the decade. For example, the occupational field of dietetics has been expanding, and its expansion is likely to continue.

Recent emphasis on physical well-being through disease prevention offers growing clinical and research opportunities for nutritionists and dietitians. Also increasing is the number of positions for inspectors and selected technicians. The demand for homemaker rehabilitation specialists is growing due to increased focus on the disabled and the aging. The greatly increasing use of data processing technologies is creating an expanding demand for home economists with technical expertise in computer technology. The importance of analyzing the effects of public policy on families contributes to the need for additional

researchers trained in the home economics social sciences.

If employment demand for scientific and professional specialists is to be met, higher education in home economics must be encouraged to produce additional graduates—particularly at the master's and doctoral levels—in such specializations as—

- Family/consumer resource management
- Food science or human nutrition
- Human environment and shelter
- Textiles and clothing

Service Specialists

Service Specialists, 1977-90	
Supply	*7,894*
Demand	*7,253*

This cluster includes occupations related to designing and providing individual and family services at local, State, and national levels. Professionals in this area generally are employed with organizations that provide social, health/medical, financial, or consumer services that help families and individuals deal with problems associated with social change and conflict.

Examples of positions in this cluster are—

- Food service supervisor
- Child guidance counselor
- Nursery supervisor
- Employment counselor
- Health education aide
- Community coordinator
- Training specialist
- Recreation counselor
- Home-service director
- Child welfare consultant
- Rural health consultant
- Welfare service aide
- Dietetic intern
- Residence director

Through 1990 the overall average annual number of graduates qualified for employment as service specialists somewhat exceeds the projected 7,253 average annual openings. Graduates with home economics degrees represent 68 percent of the demand; and the 4,965 graduates in home economics related fields, 41 percent. By degree level, doctoral graduates satisfy 2 percent of employment demand; master's 11 percent; baccalaureate, 78 percent; and associate, 18 percent.

During the 1970's the need for family and individual services expanded greatly because of social, environmental, physical, and economic problems. This trend is expected to continue through the 1980's, although perhaps at a less dramatic rate. Such a trend has resulted in an increased need for home economics professionals in licensed day-care facilities, nonformal consumer education programs, family and personal counseling programs, nutrition education programs, recreation and hospitality businesses, employment and personnel offices, and local and State social service and welfare programs.

Social, psychological, and economic research indicate that families of this and future decades will need help in coping

with continuing stress. Inflation, crowding, divorce, remarriage, job mobility, retirement, aging, disability, and chronic illness are only a few of the many problems with which families will need help from service specialists.

Employers who seek service specialists with substantial expertise in home economics will most likely direct their search toward graduates with the following specializations—

- Family and community services, especially associate degree graduates qualified to assume paraprofessional positions related to child care and public health
- Family/consumer resource management
- Food science or human nutrition
- Food service and institutional management
- Individual and family development

Educators

Educators, 1977-90	
Supply	*10,366*
Demand	*8,904*

This cluster consists of occupations that require home economics expertise as an educator. Professional areas encompass teaching and counseling from preschool through adult-education levels. Additionally, all home economics college and university faculties engaged in research and all professional home economists with the Cooperative Extension Services are included in this composite occupational cluster.

This cluster includes positions such as—

- Vocational home economics teacher
- Kindergarten teacher
- Adult education teacher
- College professor
- County Extension agent
- Area Extension specialist
- State Extension specialist

The study indicates that the annual demand for home economics educators averages 8,904, compared with an average annual supply of 10,366. The largest demand, 43 percent, is for preschool and kindergarten teachers, followed by 10 percent each for secondary school teachers, college faculty, and Cooperative Extension Service personnel.

Two situations affect the estimated number of secondary school home economics teachers needed through 1990. First, because of changes in secondary school curricula, instructional programs previously classified as home economics are often now included in different instructional areas. For example, nutrition and home nursing are covered in health and physical education; consumer education in business education; family life and parenting in social sciences; and home decorating, textile weaving, and creative stitchery in art. Such courses frequently are taught by home economics graduates. The curricula changes further expand the demand for teachers beyond the traditional home economics subject matter areas. The second situation is that the Bureau of

Labor Statistics (BLS) predicts a continued decrease in the secondary school population through 1990. Consequently, BLS estimates a 22 percent decrease in the number of secondary school teachers within the next 10 years.

However, many leading experts in home economics education contend, based on changing curricula of the nature cited, that the demand for secondary school home economics teachers will not be affected as much as that for secondary school teachers in general. In fact, general indications are that the supply of and demand for secondary school home economics teachers are balanced now, but demand may increase. Although some secondary school teaching positions presently remain unfilled, the reason is probably not an inadequate supply. Such factors as salary, geographic location, unrest in inner city schools, or generally more attractive job opportunities in other employment categories are more likely reasons.

Home economics graduates who desire teaching positions at the preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school levels should find that the job market is expanding. Adult-education employment opportunities are increasing, also, due to a growing appreciation for lifelong learning and a growing tendency by business, industry, and Government to offer noncredit instruction in such diverse areas as—

- Nutrition
- Family finance
- Interpersonal relationships
- Parenting
- Retirement planning

Likewise, vocational educational counseling is an expanding area of employment.

Faculty positions in colleges and universities generally require a doctoral degree. The number of qualified professionals available, particularly for faculty positions in family and consumer resource management, food and nutrition, human environment and shelter, individual and family development, and textiles and clothing, appears to be extremely limited.

The number of graduates with a baccalaureate or master's degree appears to be relatively adequate to fill the demand of the Cooperative Extension Services. However, they need more graduates with doctoral degrees than are available.

In summary, the number of educators with home economics expertise appears to be adequate at the baccalaureate level and may exceed future demand if high school enrollments decrease as predicted. Master's graduates represent a healthy, but not excessive, supply. The supply of doctoral graduates falls short of current and projected demand.

Average Annual Supply of and Demand for College Graduates Qualified for Employment in Home Economics and Related Fields, United States, 1977-90

Occupational cluster	Demand	Supply by degree level				
		Associate	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Total
Administrators and managers	7,115	152	3,097	711	86	4,046
Design, manufacturing, and processing specialists	7,444	1,807	2,849	1,126	12	5,794
Marketing, merchandising, and sales personnel	17,069	918	9,901	1,739	23	12,581
Media specialists	1,626	14	1,453	440	29	1,936
Scientific and professional specialists	4,819	—*	3,915	574	89	4,578
Service specialists	7,253	1,321	5,678	795	100	7,894
Educators	8,904	—*	7,858	2,159	349	10,366
Total	54,230	4,212	34,751	7,544	688	47,195

*This cluster requires a degree level higher than associate.

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